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Sewing Quilted Fabrics

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture
sewing quilted fabrics

Quilted fabrics consist of a filler, also called a batting, which is sandwiched between two layers of cloth and then prequilted by the manufacturer. Quilted fabrics range from cotton/polyester blend prints to velvets or satins. Quilteds are often double faced (reversible).

Matching or coordinating nonquilted fabrics are often available, as well as matching binding or ruffling for trimming.

Pattern selection

Since quilted fabrics are bulky, choose a pattern for a simple, unlined garment with a minimum of seams and few construction details. Avoid pleats, tucks, and full gathers. A style either without a collar or with a shawl or stand up collar may be a good choice.

Some patterns are specifically designed for quilted fabrics. Check the back of the pattern envelope for this information.

Layout, cutting, and marking

Lay out your pattern pieces on the right side of the fabric, following the lengthwise grain. If you work with a single layer of fabric rather than a double layer, you'll be more accurate. Cutting will be easier, too.

Some patterns especially designed for quilted fabrics provide pattern pieces for both the right and left sides. If your pattern doesn't, cut out one piece face up, then turn over the pattern piece and cut the other garment side.

Use a few long pins and avoid compressing the fabric when you pin and cut.

Marking techniques for quilted fabrics may be different from those you're familiar with. Snip mark with shears ¼ inch (6 mm) in from the pattern edge for notches, center front and back, fold lines, and dart edge locations. Use tailor's tacks, pin marking, or a chalk pencil for interior garment markings.

The tracing wheel/tracing paper method will damage the pattern and the markings will not show up on the cushiony surface.

Interfacing

Interfacing is not often used in styles designed for quilted fabrics. However, some lightweight fabrics may require interfacing where more support is needed, such as in collar stand or front button closure.

A lightweight sew-in type of interfacing may be the best choice, as fusibles tend to flatten quilteds. If you do want to try using a fusible, be sure to make a test sample first.

Construction techniques

Quilted fabrics are bulky, and seams will be even bulkier yet, unless you make some adjustments during construction. Grade (layer) enclosed seams, remove batting from seam allowances, and use seam and edge finishes which will be smooth and flat. To prevent raveling of the quilting stitches, tie threads or staystitch to secure.

Since quilteds vary in type of fabric used and total thickness, use scraps of fabric to make sample stitches and test seams. Determine which combination of presser foot, tension, pressure, and stitch length is most desirable for your fabric.

Generally, a longer stitch length (8-10 stitches per inch) allows for the thickness of the filler. Using slightly less pressure may help the fabric feed more easily through the machine.

Seams and seam finishes

Single and double faced quilteds are handled differently.

Single faced quilteds. After seaming, cut the quilting stitches in the seam allowance and trim away the batting. Select a seam finish that will prevent the face fabric from raveling and the batting from pulling out. You might try one of these.

1. Zigzag stitch close to the edges of the seam allowances.

2. Finish the raw edges with bias binding. This finish is especially good for unlined jackets.

3. Turn the seam allowances under ¼ inch (6 mm) and stitch close to the edges. This works best on straight seams.
Double faced quilted. Try these seams and finishes for a reversible garment.

(1) **Flat fell seam.** Sew a 5/8-inch (1.5 cm) seam. Trim the layers from one seam allowance to 1/4 inch (6 mm). Snip the quilting stitches in the other seam allowance. Trim the top layer of fabric and the batting in this seam allowance to 1/4 inch (6 mm). Bring the bottom layer of fabric in this seam allowance over the raw edges on the other side of the seam. Turn under 1/4 inch (6 mm) and stitch close to the folded edge.

(2) **Strap seam.** Sew a 5/8 inch (1.5 cm) seam. Remove the quilting stitches in the seam allowances and then remove the filler. Trim seam allowances to 1/4 inch (6 mm). Press the seam open, using a seam roll or the tip of the iron. Pin 1/2-inch (1.3 cm) braid or ribbon over the allowance and edge stitch in place. Note that the braid must be centered so that the stitching on the reverse side will be even.

**Edge finishes and hems**

**Single faced quilted.** For a flat, smooth hem, remove the batting from the hem allowance to within 1/4 inch (1.3 cm) of the hemline. Secure thread ends of the quilting stitches and hem.

**Double faced quilted.** Trim hem allowance to 1/4 inch (1.3 cm). Then stitch 1 inch (2.5 cm) from edge. Remove quilting stitches below this line, pulling threads to inside. Cut away batting inside. Next, turn both edges (facing fabric and backing fabric) to inside and edgestitch.

Tapes, braid, and other trims can also be used as edge finishes for quilted fabrics.

**Care**

Care requirements will vary, depending on the fiber and fabric combinations used in the layers. Follow the instructions given on the care label.

Quilted fabrics require little pressing. If pressing is needed, do it lightly to avoid flattening the puffiness.

Prepared by Linda Manikowske, Extension clothing and textiles specialist, SDSU. Credit and thanks to Norma Deyo and Joyce Smith, Extension clothing specialists from Ohio for information and illustrations.